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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the hypothesis that teachers can experience significant positive changes in teaching behaviors given an appropriate peer coaching staff development program which ensures accountability, support, companionship, and specific feedback in manageable chunks over an extended period of time. A discussion of the effectiveness of different types of teacher training, the process of coaching, and the characteristics of peer partners includes the implications of coaching for teachers of limited English proficient students. A description is given of a study that implemented a peer coaching model of staff development for mainstream classroom teachers, bilingual education teachers, and English as a second language teachers of students in grades K through 12. The treatment is uniform across teacher groups. Intensive training occurred over a 3-day period at a central location, and is being followed by in-district implementation over a 6-month period. The data presented in this paper reflect preliminary findings after 3 months of implementation. (JD)

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DRAFT

**A PEER COACHING MODEL
FOR TEACHERS OF LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT STUDENTS**

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A PEER COACHING MODEL
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INTRODUCTION

In Illinois and across the country many school districts are experiencing a rise in the numbers of language minority children who are limited in their ability to listen, speak, read and write in English. In order to help already employed teachers develop and use teaching models that are appropriate for language minority students, many school districts have organized in-service programs. These staff development programs vary in their design. Typically these inservices present information through several different workshop formats: theory only; theory and demonstration; and theory, demonstration and practice with feedback. The growing body of research on staff development indicates that all inservice training is not as effective as it might be. The presentation of theory alone in inservice programs guarantees that only five to ten percent of the teachers will apply the new skills in their classrooms. If, however, the presentation of content is followed up with demonstration, practice, and individual coaching there is application of new skills by 90 percent of the teachers (Joyce and Showers, 1982). These findings appear to hold true for all teachers, crossing content divisions as well as areas of specialization. It was found that bilingual teachers and English as a second language (ESL) teachers experienced a two to five percent change of behavior in their teaching when inserviced with informational types of workshops. These same teachers were able to effect a positive 90 to 95 percent change in their teaching behaviors over a period of three years when involved in a peer coaching model of staff development (Parker and Calderon, 1985). See Table 1.

TABLE I

Effectiveness of Different Types of Teacher Training

Type of training	Degree of Skill Development	Accurate & continuous use in classroom
Theory only	5%	5%
Theory and demonstrations	50%	5%
Theory, demos, practice and feedback	90%	
Theory, demos, practice feedback and coaching	90% - 100%	75 - 90%

Source: Calderon and Speigel-Coleman, 1984, p.74)

Coaching in the context of staff development has been defined as in-class follow-up by a supportive partner who helps a teacher correctly apply skills learned in training (Joyce and Showers, 1982). It was the belief of Joyce and Showers that combining a study of the rationale that underlies a teaching strategy or curriculum with demonstrations, practice and feedback would enable any teacher to learn any approach to teaching.

Coaching appears to facilitate the transfer of knowledge and skills presented in training to the classroom in several ways (Baker and Showers, 1984; Showers, 1983, 1984, 1985; Servatius and Young, 1985):

- .Coached teachers generally practice new strategies more frequently and develop greater skill in the actual moves of a new teaching strategy than do uncoached teachers who have experienced identical initial training.
- .Coached teachers use the new strategies more appropriately in terms of their own instructional objectives and the theories of specific models of teaching.
- .Coached teachers, as a group, increase the appropriateness of new teaching models over time matching models of teaching to situations and students.
- .Coached teachers are more likely than uncoached teachers to teach these same strategies to their students, which facilitates cooperative small group learning in the classrooms.

In short, teachers can experience significant positive changes in teaching behaviors given an appropriate peer coaching staff development program which ensures accountability, support, companionship, and specific feedback in manageable chunks over an extended period of time.

THE PROCESS OF COACHING

Coaching is a purposeful series of stages in the lives of peer partners designed to motivate teachers to continuously study the art of teaching. Toward this end, the team must develop a common understanding and common language which facilitates the acquisition of knowledge and skills needed to improve instruction. Coaching is an ongoing process which involves a training stage followed by various extension stages of that training. The initial training stage focuses on a specific teaching strategy or curriculum innovation. Teams are organized and begin by studying the theoretical basis which underlies the rationale of a method, approach, or technique. The partners, working within a larger group comprised of several teams, see new skills demonstrated, and practice new skills by teaching the group. Partners learn to provide feedback to team members through discussion as well as written observation forms of various types.

A second stage of the extended training involves a mutual examination by peer partners of appropriate use of a new teaching strategy. Teachers can

easily pick up a new skill but cannot so easily transfer that skill correctly to the classroom on a regular basis. At this point, the substance of the coaching process becomes selecting concepts to teach to students, reorganizing materials, teaching students to respond appropriately to new strategies, and creating lessons in areas which they have not seen demonstrated in the initial stage of training. This part of the extended training is characterized by coaching conferences that are collaborative problem-solving sessions which include joint planning of experimental lessons. The "teacher" experiments with new lessons while the "coach" observes and provides feedback, then the roles are reversed, and the experimentation continues with a new cycle of analysis, study, hypothesis, and testing. Coaching should be a continuous, never-ending process of growth that becomes institutionalized within the school district. Research indicates that time limits of three to four months are not enough time for teachers to master a model of teaching (Showers, 1985). Ideally, teachers will participate in a formal peer coaching arrangement for at least one to three years. After that time, most teachers will want to continue the process on an informal basis.

CHARACTERISTICS OF PEER PARTNERS

Exactly who the peer partners are varies from one model of staff development to another. In the initial stage, trainers and supervisors may present the theoretical base for a new strategy or curriculum innovation and may form teams with teachers as partners to do model teaching. At later stages

these trainers and supervisors will coach only to gain information. The majority of the peer partners will be teachers. These teachers will be familiar with new skills and strategies to be mastered and incorporated into their active repertoire of available models of teaching. They should have access to other teachers in their classrooms and opportunities within the school day for observations, feedback sessions, and conferences. They also need to be people who are open to experimentation and exhibit a willingness to actively persist in efforts to refine skills. They need "people skills" and the ability to communicate clearly and in a positive manner. Peer partners should also demonstrate responsibility and commitment as well as observational skills, analytical ability, self-confidence, creativity, and flexibility. Many of these skills and attributes develop and emerge as the coaching process continues. Coaching is a dynamic growth model of staff development which can make significant changes in the behaviors of teachers who want to improve teaching skills.

IMPLICATIONS OF COACHING FOR TEACHERS OF LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT STUDENTS

Teachers who work with language minority students can benefit greatly by a staff development model based on peer coaching (Parker and Calderon, 1985). Bilingual and English as a second language (ESL) teachers are often a small minority within a school faculty and within a district staff. Often they experience isolation, alienation, and even prejudice in their teaching assignments. Because of a tremendous shortage of certified bilingual and ESL teachers, often teachers are hired who are not appropriately prepared to meet

the needs of students with varying levels of ability in the native language and in English as well as varying levels of mastery of content area materials. Teachers of language minority students generally have more preparations than do regular classroom teachers, even though many are not as well prepared academically as mainstream classroom teachers.

A peer coaching program is a staff development model which can help bilingual, ESL teachers and mainstream teachers form collegial relationships. Through this model, they acquire new knowledge and skills and learn to apply these strategies to classroom activities. By experiencing small successes through coaching, teachers can become more self-confident and will experiment with teaching strategies.

PEER PARTNERSHIPS: A PEER COACHING MODEL OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Two innovative approaches, a whole language approach to literacy development and sheltered instruction in the content areas, provides the content through which this coaching model has been implemented in four Illinois school districts. The whole language approach is an approach which integrates the four skill areas of listening, speaking, reading and writing into one continuous developmental process. Students are guided to view language as whole not as the sum of many parts (Goodman, 1986). Sheltered instruction is an instructional approach which can be used to make academic instruction in English understandable to LEP students. This process is an orchestrated visual and verbal performance in which teachers use the environment, physical activities,

and visual aids to develop concepts in mathematics, science, history and other content area subjects. Student interaction which leads to a positive self concept is emphasized for each student (Northcutt and Watson 1986). Peer partners were asked to choose either the whole language approach or the sheltered instruction approach as the basis for their coaching model.

The three groups that make up the sample for this study are mainstream classroom teachers, bilingual education teachers and English as a second language (ESL) teachers of students in grades K through 12. The treatment is uniform across teacher groups. Intensive training occurred over a three-day period at a central location (Phase 1), and is being followed by in-district implementation over a six month period (Phase 2). The data presented in this paper reflect preliminary findings after three months of implementation.

Teachers began training by reading and analyzing the literature followed by workshops in which the strategies were discussed and demonstrated by consultants. Mini-lessons were planned based on the training sessions. Teachers practiced specific strategies by presenting mini-lessons to other teachers in the study. Pairs were formed in each of the four districts. These peer partners have begun the process of peer coaching. One member of the pair teaches while the partner observes and describes the lesson, then the roles are reversed. At times, the partners also team-teach the lessons. The two phase process unfolds in the following stages:

Phase 1. . A study of the theoretical basis or rationale of the method.

- . Observations and demonstrations by teachers skilled in the method.
- . Practice and feedback under sheltered conditions.

Phase 2. . Ongoing coaching and companionship as a model for instruction is incorporated in each teacher's repertoire of teaching strategies.

The process of coaching will continue with reevaluation of the theoretical underpinnings; more observations and demonstrations; more practice and feedback; and more coaching and team building.

DATA SOURCES

. Baseline and formative data are collected from the participating teachers using a variety of qualitative measures. Topical Information Surveys, Attitude Rating Scales, and Interviews elicit information about (1) the frequency of practice and use of new instructional techniques; (2) the impact of the program on individual teacher's instructional objectives and subsequent teaching models; and (3) the degree of retention of newly experienced skills and knowledge. Participants are routinely observed by peers and, in turn, observe their partners. To aid in observing, partner observation forms are completed; teams are videotaped and their members interviewed. Data on all the groups was gathered before the training was begun, at the completion of intensive in-servicing (Phase 1) and during field-based implementation (Phase 2). Consultants for the Illinois Resource Center are responsible for the design of the study, its implementation, and its evaluation. Preliminary findings will be reported in this paper. See Table 2.

TABLE 2

PEER COACHING: EVALUATION TIMELINE FOR YEAR 1

DATE	11-16-87	11-19-87	12/87	1/88	2/88	3/88	4/88	5/88	6/88
PHASE	Baseline	Phase I: Formulation	FORMATIVE EVALUATION					SUMMATIVE EVALUATION	
			Phase II: Implementation						
TOOL									
1. School District Information Form	X								
2. Participant Information Form	X								
3. Attitudinal Rating Scale	X					X			X
4. Interviews						X			
5. Topical Inform- ation Survey (Three: Peer coaching, whole language and sheltered instruction)	X	X							X
6. Framework for Peer Coaching		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
7. Partner Observation Form			X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Background about the school districts, schools and teachers was obtained by using several forms: School District Information Form, Participant Information Form and Attitudinal Rating Scale. Information about the teachers' knowledge of the peer coaching process, the whole language approach and the sheltered instruction approach was obtained from three corresponding Topical Information Surveys and interviews. Information about the specific coaching model implemented in each district was obtained from each pair's Partner Observation Forms and Framework for Peer Coaching. All forms were uniform except for the Partner Observation Forms which were created by each pair of teachers.

District A: School District (SD) A is a unit district 40 miles northwest of Chicago serving students in grades K through 12. There are over 27,000 students in the district; 2,599 of these students are limited English proficient (LEP). The students represent numerous language groups but two, Spanish and Lao, comprise a majority of the LEP students. Two teachers from one school with large numbers of both Spanish and Lao students volunteered for this project. One partner was a mainstream third grade teacher. The other partner was a Spanish bilingual teacher for a self-contained third grade. The building principal is enthusiastic and supportive in terms of flexible scheduling and release time for conferencing and observing.

District B: SD-B is a near-west Chicago, blue collar, suburban K-8 district with 6,285 students and twelve school buildings. Approximately 300 LEP

students are served within a Spanish transitional bilingual program (TBE) while an additional 200 LEP students are served within a transitional program of instruction (TPI) which is largely a pullout English as a second language (ESL) program. Four transitional language (TL) teachers are paired with four mainstream classroom teachers. The TL teachers are itinerant and travel to three schools each on a daily basis. Three mainstream teachers have self-contained classrooms: kindergarten, second grade and third grade. The fourth mainstream teacher teaches in a departmentalized junior high science program. The TBE/TPI program coordinator and building principals are supportive of the peer coaching program but since eight teachers are involved, release time has proven to be a problem.

District C: SD-C is an affluent northwest suburban K-12 district with approximately 6,000 students; 20 of these students are LEP and come from Spanish speaking homes in a small working class community which lies within the district's borders. These students are served by an itinerant Spanish bilingual teacher who splits her day between the high school and the one elementary school which has the largest number of LEP students. The bilingual teacher and the pull-out Chapter 1 reading teacher are paired in a peer coaching arrangement. The bilingual project director, who is also the elementary building principal, is very supportive of the project. Flexible release time, however, has proven to be problematic.

District D: SD-D is a northwest, suburban K-8 district with 11,000 students.

Household incomes of families in the district range from a high socio-economic status (SES) to low SES. Most of the districts 1,360 LEP students are Hispanic and are from low SES families. The two peer partnerships in this district are formed between a self-contained, Spanish bilingual first grade teacher and an itinerant ESL tutor and between two pull-out ESL tutors. The bilingual coordinator is supportive of the peer coaching project and hopes to use it as a staff development model in a Title VII project if funding becomes available. The building principals, however, have remained somewhat non-committal.

ATTITUDINAL RATING SCALE:

An attitude survey was developed and administered to the participants first in November and again in March. See Table 2. This was a 50 item rating scale designed to determine the range of attitudes among the teachers who were taking part in this peer coaching project. Items were rated on a scale of one to five; one represented strongly disagree and five represented strongly agree. Items on the survey measured teachers' feelings about ethnic groups, foreign languages, personal work ethic, and teaching/education in general. After comparing November and March surveys using a T test, it was found that statistically there was no significant difference between the two sets of surveys. This is not surprising since the teachers who volunteered for the project began with very positive attitudes towards foreign language learning, peoples from other cultures, and the concept of improved teaching through staff development. Another possible reason why no significant difference was reported could be traced to the limited length of time of the project to date. It is doubtful

that four months is enough time for a significant change in attitude to occur. Based on data obtained from the interviews, however, it may be possible that at the end of Year 1 (6/88) there will be some change in attitude.

TOPICAL INFORMATION SURVEYS

Three separate surveys were administered to participants in November prior to and following the intensive three day training period. See Table 3. These topical information surveys measured the participants' understanding of the peer coaching process, the whole language approach to literacy development and the sheltered instructional approach to teaching in the content areas. Each survey contained between eight and ten items. Each item was rated on a scale from one to three: one represented having minimal understanding and three represented having considerable understanding of the concept. A score of 3.0, therefore, was a perfect score. Scores ranged between 1.0 and 3.0. Differences in pre and post scores were compared using a T test. It was found that there was no significant difference in scores but there did exist a trend toward more understanding as represented by the sample of raw scores. See Table 3. Although the preliminary results do show a trend toward more understanding at the end of the preliminary training, the results obtained from administering these surveys at the end of Year 1 will prove to be more illuminating since it is assumed that more time is needed for teachers to develop a fuller understanding of the concepts in question.

TABLE 3

TOPICAL INFORMATION SURVEYS

PARTICIPANT	PEER COACHING		WHOLE LANGUAGE		SHELTERED INSTRUCTION	
	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST
# 3	1.6	2.5	1.88	2.25	1.63	1.88
# 5	1.0	2.0	2.0	2.25	1.0	1.5
# 6	1.0	1.2	1.75	2.13	1.25	2.13
# 8	1.3	1.88	1.38	2.75	1.0	2.5
#10	1.0	2.3	1.38	3.0	1.25	2.5
#12	1.1	2.4	2.25	2.88	1.88	1.63
#13	1.1	3.0	1.63	2.75	1.25	2.5

FRAMEWORK FOR PEER COACHING

Each pair of partners developed a unique framework for their own peer coaching model. This framework outlined the coaching model to be used, detailed the aspects of instruction that would be targeted by each pair and provided a time line for each pair to follow for six months. Analysis of these frameworks, coupled with data from interviews revealed that although each pair had specific objectives outlined, these objectives were constantly evolving and changing. The models remained mostly unchanged yet, in some instances streamlined. Several of the partners, for example, had begun to pre-conference over the telephone in an attempt to save time. This was mostly found in schools where not enough release time was provided by the administration.

INTERVIEWS:

At this stage in the project, information gleaned from interviewing the peer partners provided the most amount of information about changes in attitudes and teaching behaviors. The following ten questions were used to provide a basis of comparison among the four groups of peer partners within the four districts:

Peer Coaching Interview

1. What are your personal expectations from peer coaching?
What are the benefits you hope to gain? What benefits have you gained?
2. What procedures are you using to implement the model?
3. What are some of the problems you have encountered?
How do you think these problems can be rectified?
4. At this point in time, what one aspect of the model would you keep?
What one aspect would you eliminate?
5. How was your peer partner chosen?
What set of criteria should be used in selecting a partner?
6. Do you feel that goals and objectives are well defined?
Do they help guide the project?
7. Is your timeline realistic? How often do you practice new strategies?
How might you alter your timeline to better accommodate changes that are occurring throughout this process?
8. Are you comfortable with the approach (Sheltered Instruction or Whole Language) for which your model of coaching has been designed?
9. What kinds of support services do you feel are necessary to ensure the success of this project?
10. What ways can this peer coaching model be modified to better meet your needs?

Nearly all of the teachers hoped to acquire new skills and to learn new techniques for working with LEP students. Initially teachers did not verbalize a desire to become more cooperative or collegial but as the process unfolded many of the teachers realized that one of the greatest benefits was the personal satisfaction they were feeling that came about as a result of increased positive interaction with both their partners and other interested and enthusiastic professionals. One ESL teacher from District B commented that now she no longer felt isolated from the rest of the faculty - a condition which she had accepted as being normal for an itinerant, pull-out teacher. A mainstream teacher from District B expressed relief because she now understood what ESL teachers did and why. She further commented that for the first time she understood that LEP students had different needs which included an adapted curriculum.

The procedures used to implement each district's model vary. It was found that in all districts the teachers get together in pairs to decide what teacher behaviors, skills or activities would be the focus of their lessons and subsequent observations. Many of the pairs of partners mapped out all of the targeted behaviors ahead of time for the entire six month period. Others identified only a few major items and allowed for the inclusion of certain behaviors that happen to occur naturally as the process continued. All pairs found that change and adaptability was necessary. All pairs were following the sequence of a pre-conference, observation, time for reflection and post conference. The pre-conference for nearly all of the teams was a time for the teacher who was to be observed to do most of the talking. This teacher outlined the lesson and identified exactly what the observer was to describe. In most

cases the role of the teacher doing the observing was thought to be that of objective recorder or neutral describer. Only in two cases where the teachers had established close friendships was the observer allowed to mention behaviors that had not been agreed upon during the preconference. Nine teachers mentioned that this was especially important during the initial stages when anxiety about being observed was still high. Two of the pairs had found that in order to save time they would pre-conference over the telephone the day before the observation. None of the teachers, however, thought that a post conference could be done over the telephone. All indicated that face to face communication, was necessary for an effective post conference.

All eight pairs of partners agreed that the biggest problem facing peer coaches is the restriction of time. The second biggest problem was identified as not enough flexibility in scheduling. Pairs who depended on administrators to provide release time were the most frustrated because of inconsistency in scheduling. Pairs who were able to work out themselves the logistics of balancing two routines appeared to be the most satisfied with coaching. All of the teachers identified administrative support as the key ingredient for success or failure of the project. Another problem verbalized by the partners was the lack of direction in identifying teaching behaviors that formed the basis for each observation. Five of the eight pairs indicated that they would like to have had lists of behaviors for both the whole language approach and the sheltered instruction approach. This topic was always a source of much discussion as some of the pairs enjoyed the freedom of being able to come up with their own behaviors while other pairs would have preferred having already prepared lists.

Most peer partners did not feel that any aspects of the coaching model could be eliminated. Six pairs did express a desire for follow-up workshops and more model teaching in their classrooms by outside consultants.

All of the partners had been paired on a volunteer basis. It was the consensus of the group that this was the best way for partner selection. All teachers felt that the most important criteria to be used in selecting a partner would be fairness, honesty and objectivity. Four pairs indicated that superior teaching ability was also vital. This point was also a source of a great deal of discussion. Many teachers felt that the purpose of peer coaching was to improve teaching skills, therefore, picking an expert teacher was not necessary. The teachers unanimously felt that they themselves were gaining new insights and acquiring many new skills. In several of the interviews teachers commented that even the best of teachers could get even better. One partner repeated a comparison of peer coaching to athletic coaching, which was used in the initial training, reminding the group that even the best professional football players have coaches.

Seven of the eight pairs of teachers commented that they felt the goals and objectives were well defined, and that these goals helped guide the implementation of their particular model of coaching. The comment was again made, however, that partners needed more guidance in coming up with behaviors and skills that would be the focus of the classroom observations.

All eight teams of partners felt that the timeline they were following was realistic. All teachers are observed and observe at least once a month. Four of the eight pairs are attempting to be observed and observe twice a month. This occurs in buildings where the principals were very supportive of the model. These principals were taking over the classes of the partners to allow for more observation opportunities. Most teachers felt that initially two observations per month per teacher would be ideal, and that later one per month would be adequate to ensure that the process continued.

Three of the pairs are using the sheltered instruction approach and five are using the whole language approach to literacy development. Peer partners were able to choose the approach they wanted to use and all pairs indicated that they were comfortable with their choices. Teachers did, however, want more inservice training in specific areas and wanted outside consultants to do more in district model teaching. One of the benefits that teachers are beginning to see is that after working with these approaches teachers feel confident in their ability to create and try novel activities which are consistent with the theoretical underpinnings of these approaches.

Teachers' opinions about the kind of support services needed are mixed. All of the teachers agree that the project must have district support at the administrative level, but teachers disagree about issues such as release time and getting coverage for classes. Eight of the sixteen teachers had easily fit peer coaching into their schedules by giving up preparation periods, coming early, staying late and talking over the telephone. Other teachers were

reluctant to make these changes. Half of the teachers thought that the self satisfaction and positive changes were well worth the price; the other half did not agree. The implication is that if a model of peer coaching is to work for all teachers, then administrative support in terms of release time is necessary.

CONCLUSION

These initial results confirm that peer coaching is a viable staff development model for teachers of LEP students. Its initial effectiveness has been documented by comparing baseline data with Phase 1 data, and by comparing Phase 1 results with those initial findings from Phase 2.

It is anticipated that the peer partners will continue to exhibit growth in skill development, practice new strategies frequently, incorporate these new approaches into their own models of teaching and exhibit retention of newly acquired knowledge and skills. All three groups should demonstrate significant gains in these areas when data is evaluated at the end of Year 1. It is hoped that this study will augment the body of research on effective teaching practices and its implications for teachers of LEP students. The formation of collegial relationships with other teachers is of particular importance to ESL and bilingual educators who are often alienated from the educational mainstream. Thus, this staff development model will not only directly affect teaching personnel, but ideally will positively impact the education of language minority students. Questions for further research in the area of peer coaching as a staff development model should focus on the amount of change, over time, of

teacher attitudes and behaviors as well as changes in school climate. It is hoped that future research will also concern itself with the positive effects of peer coaching on the achievements of LEP students both academically and socially.

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